

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 047919
ORIGIN OES-07

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SUVA
INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:EFIS, SENV, IWC-1, TN

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE WHALING ACTIVITIES IN TONGA

1. RUMORS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN CIRCULATING IN THE U.S. CONSERVATION COMMUNITY THAT TONGA HAS OR MAY BE CONSIDERING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMERCIAL WHALING OPERATIONS. IF THIS IS SO, IT WOULD BE OF GREAT CONCERN TO USG, SINCE WE ARE STRIVING TO MAINTAIN OR, WHEN NECESSARY, INCREASE WHALE STOCKS THRU THE CONSERVATION REGIME OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC). WE WOULD URGE GOT TO JOIN IWC IF IT PLANS TO BEGIN WHALING TO ENSURE THAT IT IS INCLUDED IN THE QUOTAS ESTABLISHED BY THE IWC AND THEREFORE DOES NOT REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IWC CONSERVATION REGIME.

2. FOLLOWING MAY BE USEFUL SUMMARY DATA ON IWC: ORGANI-
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ZATION WAS SET UP IN 1945 UNDER INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE REGULATION OF WHALING TO PERFORM REGULATORY FUNCTION IN INTEREST OF MANAGING WHALE STOCK LEVELS TO ENABLE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF WHALING INDUSTRY. FROM THIS PRIMARILY INDUSTRY-ORIENTED APPROACH, IWC HAS EVOLVED IN RECENT YEARS SIGNIFICANTLY TOWARD MORE OF A CONSERVATION ROLE. IT HAS ESTABLISHED COMPLETE PROTECTION FROM

COMMERCIAL WHALING FOR FIVE SEVERELY REDUCED WHALE SPECIES

(BLUE, HUMPBACK, RIGHT, BOWHEAD, AND GRAY); FOR OTHERS IT SETS SELECTIVE MORATORIA FOR INDIVIDUAL STOCKS FALLING BELOW A SCIENTIFICALLY DETERMINED SAFE POPULATION LEVEL; FOR STOCKS OF WHICH SOME COMMERCIAL TAKE CAN BE ALLOWED, IT ESTABLISHES HARVEST QUOTAS. UNDER RECENTLY ADOPTED PROCEDURES, SUBSTANTIAL AND PROGRESSIVE OVERALL REDUCTIONS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED BY IWC IN NUMBER OF WHALES TAKEN WORLDWIDE IN RECENT SEASONS. PRESENT MEMBERSHIP OF IWC INCLUDES: ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, DENMARK, FRANCE, ICELAND, JAPAN, MEXICO, NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, SOUTH AFRICA, UNITED KINGDOM, SOVIET UNION AND U.S. BASIC ANNUAL COST FOR IWC MEMBERSHIP FOR NON-WHALING NATION APPROXIMATELY \$4000 (WHALING NATIONS PAY MORE, COMPUTED ON CATCH).

3. DEPT AWARE OF SMALL SUBSISTENCE-TYPE COMMERCIAL WHALING WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE IN TONGA FOR MANY YEARS. UNDERSTAND THEY TAKE 2-6 WHALES EACH YEAR. MAJOR USG CONCERN IS WITH ANY LARGER-SCALE COMMERCIAL WHALING TONGA MAY BE CONSIDERING.

4. ACTION: WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION EMBASSY CAN OBTAIN ON WHETHER TONGA IS CONSIDERING OR HAS DECIDED TO BEGIN LARGER SCALE WHALING. IF SO, WOULD LIKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO KNOW WHEN THEY WILL BEGIN, SPECIES OF WHALES TO BE HUNTED, AND EXTENT OF PLANNED EFFORT (E.G., NUMBER OF SHIPS, LENGTH OF WHALING SEASON, ETC.). EMBASSY MAY INDICATE OUR CONCERN ABOUT ANY TONGALESE WHALING OPERATIONS. VANCE

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Draft Date: 24 feb 1978
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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